

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 347

By McDonald

A RESOLUTION to honor and recognize Virginia Thigpen on the occasion of her retirement as Chairman of the Sumner County Election Commission.

WHEREAS, it is appropriate that the members of this legislative body should honor those citizens who in their years of industry have performed with uncommon devotion and enthusiasm; and

WHEREAS, one such outstanding individual is Virginia Thigpen who, having served with distinction throughout her tenure as an appointed official, educator, and political activist, will begin a much deserved retirement from her post with the Sumner County Election Commission, which she has served as Chairman with the utmost integrity; and

WHEREAS, appointed by the State Election Commission, Mrs. Thigpen has diligently upheld the mission of the Sumner County Election Commission by keeping the ballot pure and secure so that legally registered voters are allowed to vote, securing a correct and accurate count of the ballots cast, and allowing voters the freedom to cast their vote in secret without fear, intimidation, or influence; and

WHEREAS, from an early age, Virginia Thigpen learned the value of service to others, a principal that has played an important and pivotal role throughout her life; she has been a strong advocate on issues that involve the inequality of women, and she has maintained a passion for women's issues throughout her life; and

WHEREAS, moving to Gallatin in the early 1970s, Mrs. Thigpen and her late husband, Walter Thigpen, were both charter faculty members at Volunteer State Community College (VSCC), and during her distinguished teaching career as a professor at VSCC, she taught English, Spanish, and Speech, developed the Honors program, and retired from the college as Chair of the Department of Communications. In 1998, the Tennessee Board of Regents named

the library and media center at VSCC the Thigpen Library in recognition of the work Mrs. Thigpen and her late husband accomplished for the college; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Thigpen has tirelessly worked to provide equal educational opportunities for women through several esteemed organizations including Philanthropic Educational Organization (P.E.O.), Kappa Gamma International, and the University of Tennessee Women's Council; she also acts as a trustee of the VSCC Foundation and as a trustee of Sumner Academy; and

WHEREAS, her political career is as impressive as her teaching career and Mrs. Thigpen has played an important and active role advocating on behalf of women for equality within the educational and legal systems; and

WHEREAS, Virginia Thigpen, who has often been called upon for her leadership and energy in the political arena, was the first woman elected to the Sumner County Commission in 1978, and honorably served in that position until 1982; she is a member of the University of Tennessee Public Affairs Council; and she served with acumen and alacrity as president of the Tennessee Women's Political Caucus for two terms; and

WHEREAS, her friendship and counsel were highly valued by her associates while she worked on passage of the spousal rape bill in the Tennessee Legislature; and

WHEREAS, deeply involved in her community, Virginia Thigpen has devoted her time and energies to a number of civic organizations, dedicating to each her coveted leadership style. She served as president of the Gallatin Arts Council for ten years, board member of Greater Gallatin and Cumberland Mental Health, member of the Sumner County Health and Education Facilities Board, member of the Hendersonville League of Women Voters, member of the Downtown Library Committee, sustaining member of the Junior Service League of Gallatin, sponsorship chair for the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life, and as a breast cancer survivor, she has mentored five women; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Thigpen epitomizes the ideal of the consummate professional and public servant, and she has been recognized with numerous awards of distinction including the VSCC Martin Luther King Diversity Award in 1994, the Tennessee Communication Association's Outstanding Communication Educator of the Year in 2000, and she was nominated for the prestigious 2009 ATHENA Award; and

WHEREAS, her many professional accomplishments aside, Mrs. Thigpen was fortunate to have shared both love and companionship with her late husband, Walter Thigpen, and her two sons; and

WHEREAS, throughout her estimable career, Virginia Thigpen has demonstrated the utmost professionalism, ability, and integrity, winning the unbridled respect and admiration of the citizens of Sumner County and the State of Tennessee; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we extend to Virginia Thigpen our heartfelt wishes for a happy and fulfilling retirement from the Sumner County Election Commission, applaud her for advocacy of issues critical to women, and wish her every continued success in her future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.